

January 17, 2023

Senator Jim Carlson, Chair
Senate Elections Committee

RE: SF26 – Right to vote restoration to individuals convicted of a felony upon completion of any term of incarceration imposed and executed by a court for the offense

Dear Senator Carlson:

I am writing to express my strong support for SF 26, which would restore the right to vote to individuals convicted of a felony upon completion of incarceration. I ask that my letter be included in the written public testimony/record of the Senate Elections Committee.

Current Minnesota law creates a form of second-class citizenship, reminiscent of Jim Crow laws, made up of formerly incarcerated individuals who are living and working in our communities but who are denied the right to vote. These individuals pay local, state, and federal taxes, they send their children to our public schools, and yet they cannot vote for any elected office, be it for a member of their local school board or for the president of the United States.

Minnesota has some of the nation's longest probation terms. There are individuals who, under current law, are barred from voting for as long as 40 years. On Election Day, these citizens can only watch as family members and friends exercise their right to vote. This sends a harmful and shaming message to these individuals, even while they are working to rebuild their lives in healthy ways, that they are not fully part of their communities.

Restoring voting rights to individuals living in and contributing to their communities would help people on probation and supervised release have a successful return home, which in turn helps all of us.

I urge the Committee to approve SF26 as written, and block any amendments designed to deny the restoration of voting rights to individuals convicted of certain felonies, or to impose financial obligations on those seeking restoration of the right to vote.

Sincerely,

Rebecca H. Hamblin
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